

by Doug Moench, Dan Day and Ron Harris



AZTEC XOCIE



The PENUMBRA

ECLIPSE COMICS • P. O. BOX 199 • GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95446

ON THE RACKS

ALIEN WORLDS no. 9



Frank Brunner, Al Williamson, Bo Hampton and Bruce Jones have saved the best for last — as this final issue of the series gives you the finest in science fiction entertainment.

DNAGENTS no. 18



Mark Evanier, Jerry Ordway, Mitch Schauer, Mike Sekowsky and Willie Blyberg combine to bring you "Epilogues Three," an issue that deals with repercussions from recent events in the series.



CROSSFIRE no. 7

Some guys have all the luck — but others seem to be "Trapped in High School for All Eternity." Crossfire faces off against the Machete Killer in this Mark Evanier / Dan Spigle masterpiece.

SABRE no. 12



"Miscellaneous Defenses" by Don McGregor and Jose Ortiz: Sabre and Melissa name the babies while Simon Shark plots his escape from the settlement, and Aloysius the Robot mixes paint!

WHAT THEY DO: As I write this, it's two days after Christmas, and I'd like to tell you about a Christmas surprise I got this year from Philip DeWalt, our man with the paint pots.

Phil, as you probably know, is the guy who colours AZTEC ACE and a host of other features for our full-colour laser-scan titles. His work has appeared in ZOT!, TWISTED TALES, ECLIPSE MONTHLY and many other Eclipse comics.

Imagine my surprise when I opened my Christmas card from Phil, only to discover that it was one of those clever new musical ones from Hallmark—you know, the ones that play carols for you via miniaturized circuitry built right into the card itself.

Not surprising enough, you say?

You say you got one too, and anyway, what's so special about a Christmas card—even a musical one?

Hey, the REAL surprise came when I turned the card over and read the credits on the back!

"Silent Night" was arranged especially for Hallmark by Philip DeWalt."

That's what it said. And yes, indeed, it's the SAME Philip DeWalt, our man with the paint pots.

Phil, a musician as well as a colourist, created three arrangements for Hallmark's 1984 musical Christmas card line. There are three more Springtime cards on the boards from him as well.

"The best ones I've done so far are 'Silent Night' in the Christmas bunch and 'Take Me Out to the Ball Game' in the Spring set," says Phil. He also adds that Hallmark will feature more of his musical cards arrangements for Christmas 1985, plus a musical tree ornament which will play 'The Skaters' Waltz.'

Okay, all you Eclipse completists out there—now you've gotta get into musical greeting cards too!

DNAGENTS PROGRESS: When CBS Television optioned the DNAGENTS for a prime-time live-action show, we promised you that we would keep you absolutely up to date on any progress (or lack of same) as the project makes its way from raw idea to televised show.

Okay—the last update (in the latest issue of ECLIPSE EXTRA) revealed that the script for the pilot show had been approved. This week's NEW news is that DNAGENTS co-creator and original artist Will Meugniot has been hired to storyboard the pilot show's opening sequence. Also, a casting director has been hired, which is naturally a good sign that casting for the actors to play Rainbow, Tank, Surge, Amber and Sham will soon follow.

In other words, things are definitely moving right along and no snags have developed at all. This is not to say that we can guarantee the show will indeed air as planned in Fall, 1985. It might never make it on the air at all. But so far, so good.

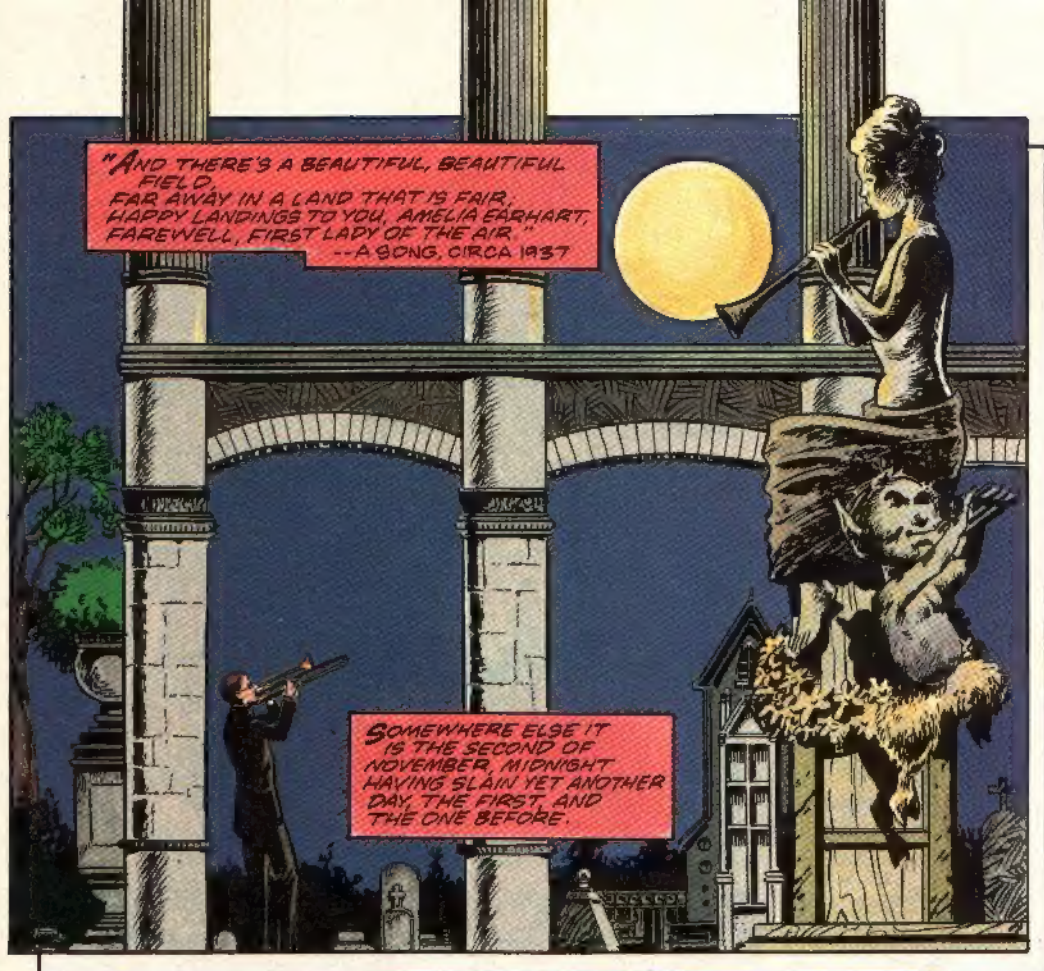
According to DNAGENTS co-creator and writer-editor, Mark Evanier, "When the first announcement of the option signing was made, I said we were at Step Five out of a theoretical Ten. We're now at Step Six-and-a-Half, with Step Ten being the moment you can turn on your TV and actually watch a show called 'THE DNAGENTS.'"

Stay tuned for further updates as they happen!

catherine yronwode

IN YOUR HANDS

We've all seen Ace and Bridget vreebing through the Golden Meld, that strange swirling area between times and places. We've also seen glimpses of Five-Worlds, where concentric layers of "history" co-exist in balance, if not harmony. At the liquid center of Five-Worlds float the city-ships of the Ebonati, but on the outer layers live the legions of the time lost. See the inside back cover for biographical details on three such souls... or read on:



"AND THERE'S A BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL
FIELD
FAR AWAY IN A LAND THAT IS FAIR,
HAPPY LANDINGS TO YOU, AMELIA EARHART,
FAREWELL, FIRST LADY OF THE AIR."
--A SONG, CIRCA 1937

SOMEWHERE ELSE IT
IS THE SECOND OF
NOVEMBER, MIDNIGHT
HAVING SLAIN YET ANOTHER
DAY, THE FIRST AND
THE ONE BEFORE.



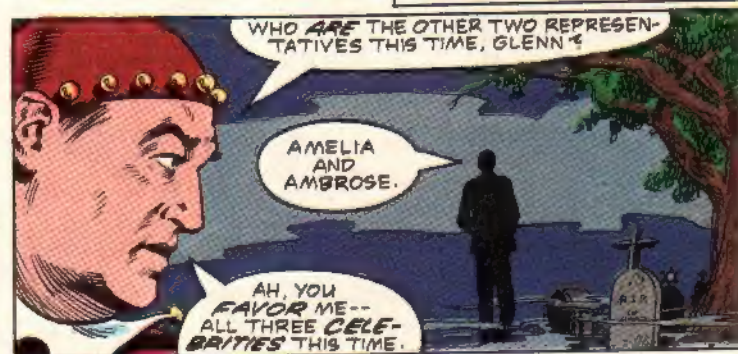
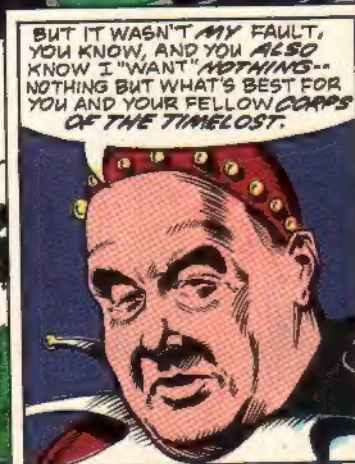
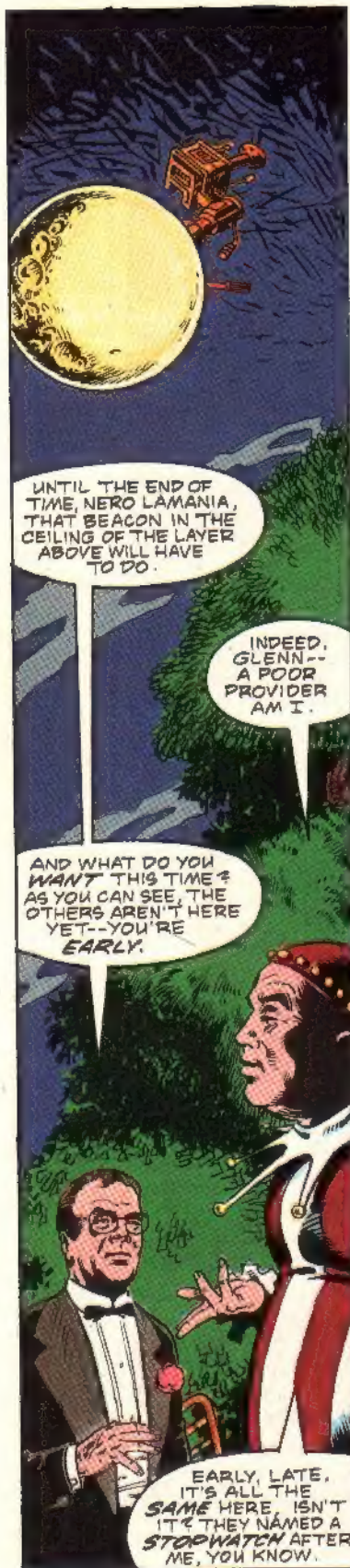
BUT HERE THERE IS NO FIRST
OR SECOND, NO MINUTE, NO
HOUR, NOTHING BUT A NOW
OF FOREVER, AND THE SWEETLY
MOURNFUL SIMPLICITY OF A
SERENADE TO THE MOONLIGHT.



TOO BAD THERE'S
NO REAL MOON HERE,
GLENN.

NO
REAL SKY,
FOR THAT
MATTER.

HERE THE
TOMBSTONES
ARE EVER SO
HARD... BUT
NEVER QUITE
COLD.





GOOD POINT, GLENN, AND SPEAKING OF OTHER LAYERS, SHALL WE STROLL TO THE **SHORE** FOR A PEEK AT THE **CORE**?

WHY NOT? I'VE GOT THE TIME.

BUT AS EVER, GLENN, BE MINDFUL OF THE FRIGHTFUL **VERTIGO**, EH?

YEAH--LIKE BEING IN A PLANE GOING DOWN OUT OF CONTROL.



THAT WOULD BE **XODARAP** STRAIGHT DOWN, EH? KROK'S **PERSONAL SYN-CHRONI-CITY**...?

DON'T BE COY, NERO...



WHY **ELSE** WOULD WE PICK THIS GRAVEYARD?--OTHER THAN FOR **ATMOSPHERE**...



...IF NOT TO BE CLOSE TO KROK'S CITY-SHIP WHEN--

IT'S **EX-PLODING!**

FAWHOOM

OH, MY, OH, DEAR.



"APPARENTLY A SERIOUS **MISHAP**, EH, GLENN?

POK POK SPATT

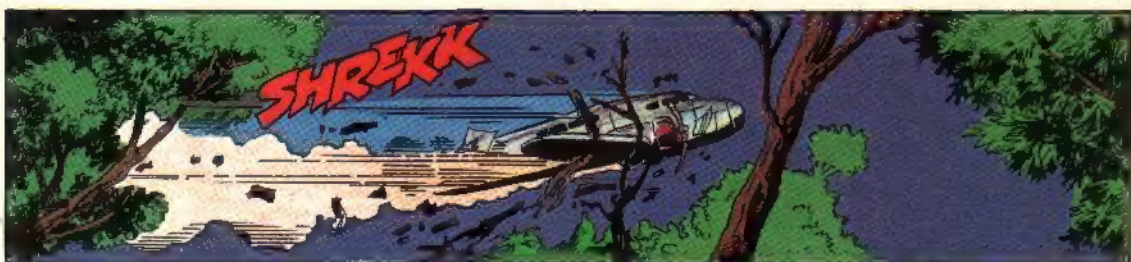
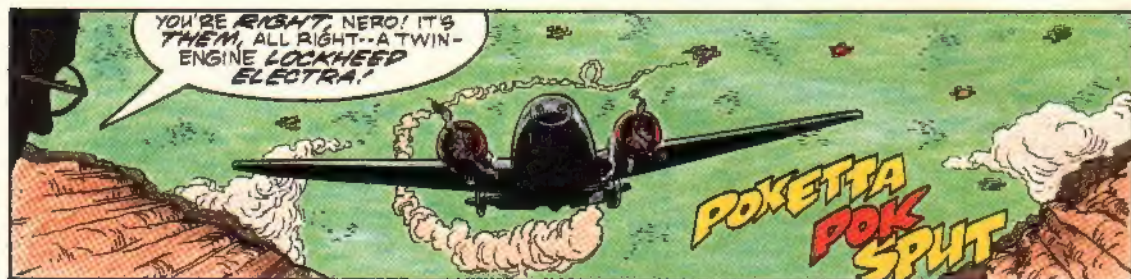


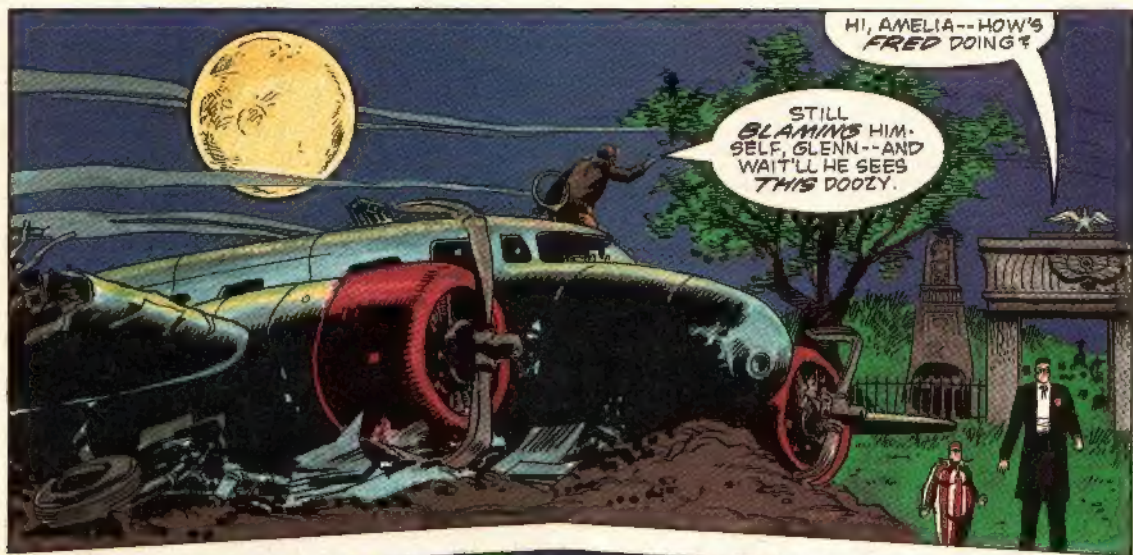
BURP PLOK BURP PLOK BURP

BUT LOOK, GLENN --ALL IS NOT YET **LOST!**

THERE'S A PLANE --STRUGGLING UP FOR THIS VERY **SHORE!**







OH, ~~BOSH~~, AMELIA! YOU KNOW DAMNED WELL I'M A BETTER NAVIGATOR THAN FRED NOONAN ANY DAY!

AND YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN US-- TOOK OUT ~~THREE~~ NIGHTGAUNTS BEFORE THEY LOBBED THAT ~~MAG-GEL~~ AT THE ELECTRA!

OF COURSE, AMELIA HERE DOESN'T ~~BE-LIEVE~~ IN KILLING...

BELIEF AND EXALTATION ARE QUITE DIFFERENT THINGS, MR. BIERCE.

BEST ACTION I'VE SEEN SINCE ~~CHICKA-MAUGA~~ OR ~~SHILON~~--

BUT YOU ~~SUC-CEEDED~~...

WOULDN'T HAVE COME BACK IF WE DIDN'T--

--ALTHOUGH AMELIA BARELY GOT OUT OF THE ~~TEMPORT~~ TOWER WITH HER TEETH STILL FIXED IN HER MOUTH.

THAT'S WHEN I HAD TO PUT DOWN THE THREE 'GAUNTS--SO SHE COULD REACH THE PLANE.

WE TOOK THE ~~MAG-GEL~~ HIT ON ~~THRE-OFF~~.

HAVEN'T FELT MY HEART SO HARD SINCE I TOOK THAT WOUND ON KENESAW MOUNTAIN IN 1864.

WAS IT MORE EXCITING THAN THE OCCURENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE, AMBROSE?

SO NERO LAMANIA RE-VEALS HIMSELF A READER, EH?

I THOUGHT I WAS OUT OF PRINT ON FIVE-WORLDS.

YOU... ARE.

EVERY-ONE IS.

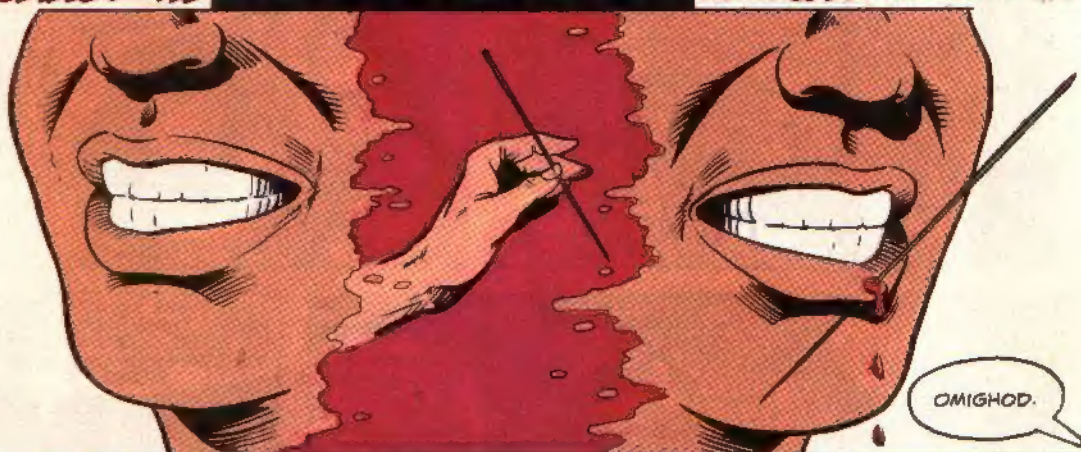
BUT YOUR ~~WORDS~~ ARE NOT.

UNFORTUNATELY.



FORKED LIP

TENDCHITILAN 1518



A THORN FROM
THE MAGUEY
CACTUS.

BUT WHY
INFLICT SUCH PAIN
ON A MERE CHILD--?



THE THORN WILL REMAIN
IN PLACE UNTIL BED-
TIME--

--AND ODDS
ARE, TOMOR-
ROW WILL SEE
THE TRUTH.



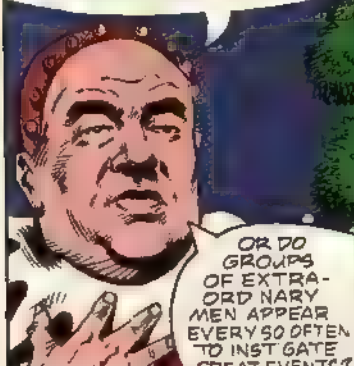




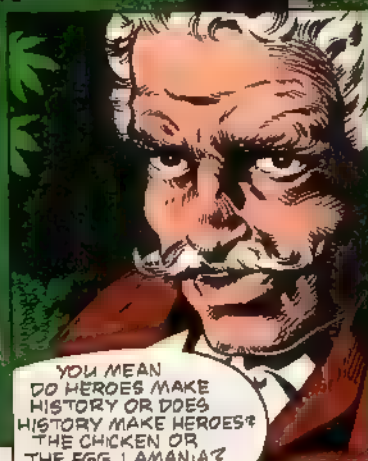
TOO BAD YOU
DISAPPEARED A
YEAR BEFORE I FORMED
MY OWN ORCHESTRA,
AMELIA. YOU WOULD'VE
LIKED THE SOUND--
SOMETIMES SWEET,
OTHER TIMES HOT

YOU FORGET
GLENN. I PLAY YOUR
RECORDS ALL THE
TIME--WHEN I'M NOT
LISTENING TO THE
THOMPSON
TWIN.

HERE'S A TOPIC WITHIN OUR
FAVORITE SUBJECT OF HISTORY.
DO EVENTS CONSPIRE TO CREATE
EXTRAORDINARY MEN?



OR DO
GROUPS
OF EXTRA-
ORDINARY
MEN APPEAR
EVERY SO OFTEN
TO INSTIGATE
GREAT EVENTS?



YOU MEAN
DO HEROES MAKE
HISTORY OR DOES
HISTORY MAKE HEROES?
THE CHICKEN OR
THE EGG, LAMANIA?

YES BUT I'VE WONDERED
ABOUT IT DID THE SITUATIONS
IN BRITAIN AND COLONIAL
AMERICA IMPEL CERTAIN MEN
AND WOMEN TO GREAT WORDS
AND DEEDS...



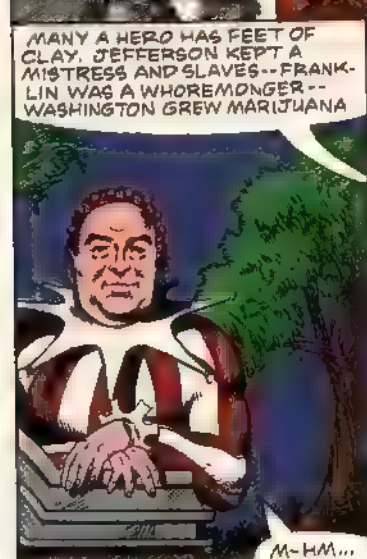
OR WAS IT
MERE COINCIDENCE
THAT
WASHINGTON,
JEFFERSON,
FRANKLIN,
ADAMS, PITCHER,
JOHN PAUL
JONES--

BENEDICT
ARNOLD!

--ALL EXISTED
IN THAT PARTICULAR
TIME AND PLACE?

I TAKE IT
YOUR VOTE IS
FOR EVENTS,
AMELIA, AND
NOT MEN?

I SUSPECT
A COMBINATION
--BUT WHAT
IS 'GREAT'?



MANY A HERO HAS FEET OF
CLAY. JEFFERSON KEPT A
MISTRESS AND SLAVES--FRANK-
LIN WAS A WHOREMONGER--
WASHINGTON GREW MARIJUANA

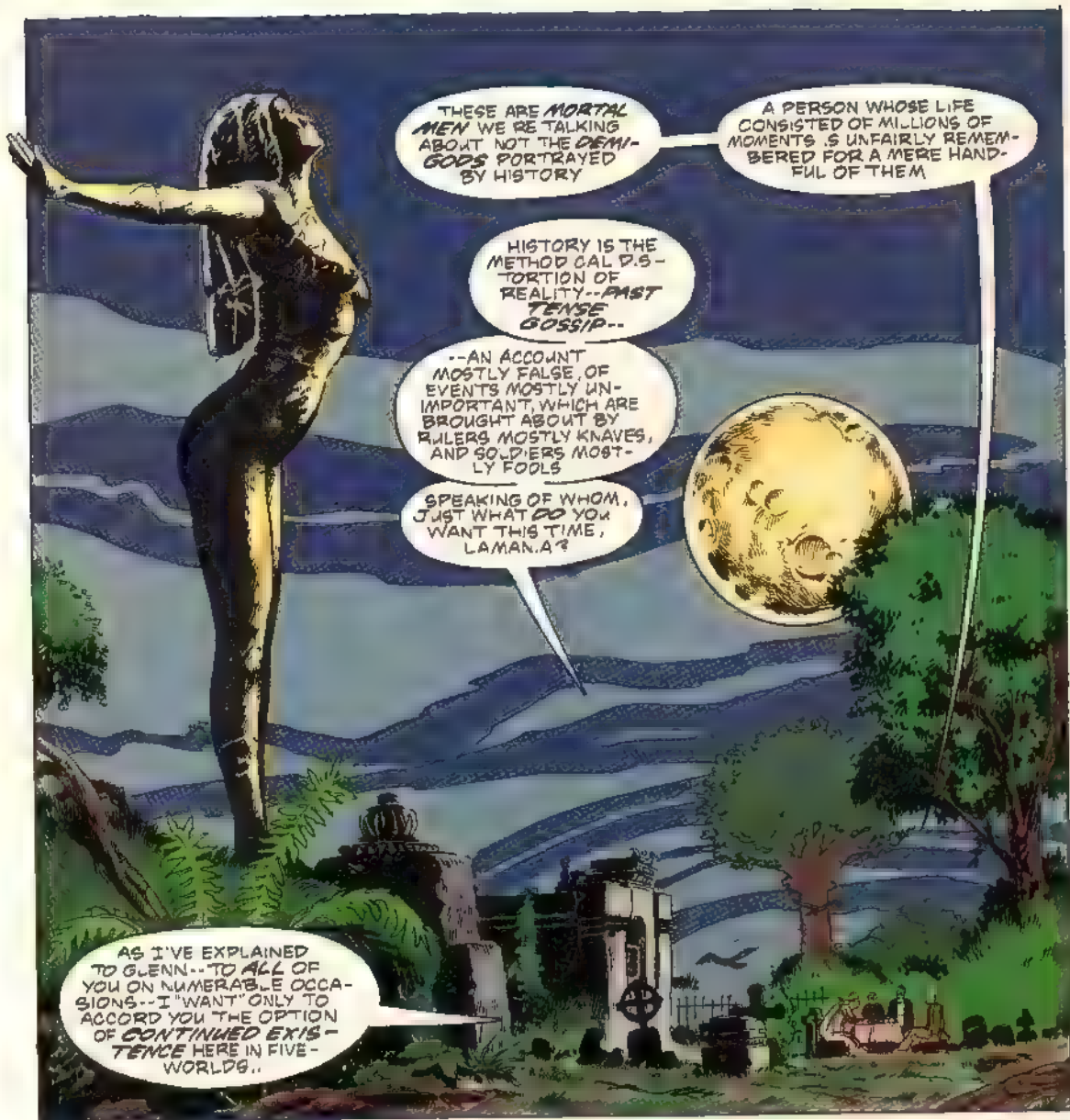
ASIDE FROM THE SLAVE-KEEPING,
AMELIA, A LOT OF FOLKS MIGHT
NOT THINK THOSE THINGS ARE
SO BAD--



EXACTLY--
AND EVEN IF
GETTING HIGH
AND HAVING
SEX WERE
CONCEIVABLY
'BAD'--

--AND
SOMETIMES
THEY ARE...

WHEN?!



THESE ARE *MORTAL MEN* WE'RE TALKING ABOUT NOT THE *DEMI-GODS* PORTRAYED BY HISTORY

A PERSON WHOSE LIFE CONSISTED OF MILLIONS OF MOMENTS IS UNFAIRLY REMEMBERED FOR A MERE HANDFUL OF THEM

HISTORY IS THE METHODICAL DISTORTION OF REALITY--*PAST TENSE GOSSIP*--

--AN ACCOUNT MOSTLY FALSE OF EVENTS MOSTLY UNIMPORTANT, WHICH ARE BROUGHT ABOUT BY RULERS, MOSTLY KNAVES, AND SOLDIERS MOSTLY FOOLS

SPEAKING OF WHOM, JUST WHAT DO YOU WANT THIS TIME, LAMAN.A?

AS I'VE EXPLAINED TO GLENN--TO ALL OF YOU ON NUMERABLE OCCASIONS--I "WANT" ONLY TO ACCORD YOU THE OPTION OF *CONTINUED EXISTENCE* HERE IN FIVE-WORLDS..

YOUR NORMAL SPANS WERE CUT SHORT IN REAL-TIME--ERGO, YOU CANNOT LIVE *HERE*, AS DOES EVERYONE WHO HAS "MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED" FROM REAL-TIME

BUT SINCE YOUR EXISTENCE HERE IS UNNATURAL AND TENUOUS AT BEST ITS CONTINUANCE REQUIRES CERTAIN...*RITUALS* SHALL WE SAY...SMALL SYMBOLIC GESTURES--

--TO APPEASE THE CLOCKWORK SPIRIT OF DELICATE BALANCE PREVAILING HERE WITH YOUR ADDED PRESENCE

WHEN THE *TIME* FOR SUCH A GESTURE PERIODICALLY COMES ROUND AND AS THE *CARE-TAKER* OF THIS LAYER, I MERELY INFORM YOU OF THE *NATURE* OF THE GESTURE OR RITUAL REQUIRED

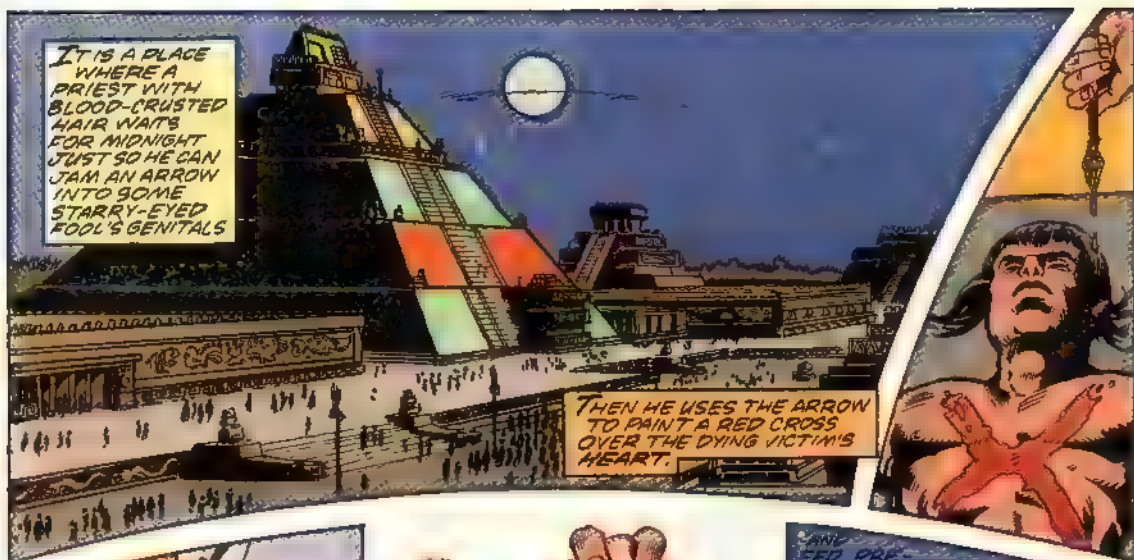
THE REST IS UP TO YOU EITHER PERFORM IT AND GO ON OR DON'T--AND DON'T.

YAWN



JUST ANOTHER MIDNIGHT PICNIC





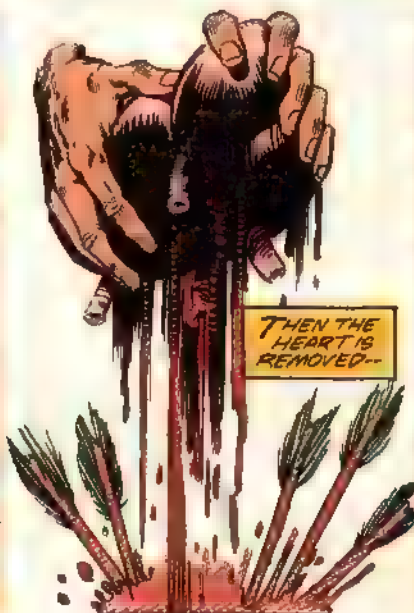
IT IS A PLACE WHERE A PRIEST WITH BLOOD-CRUSTED HAIR WAITS FOR MIDNIGHT JUST SO HE CAN JAM AN ARROW INTO SOME STARRY-EYED FOOL'S GENITALS

THEN HE USES THE ARROW TO PAINT A RED CROSS OVER THE DYING VICTIM'S HEART.



AND THE OTHER PRIESTS USE THE CROSS AS A TARGET...

...CAPERING WHILE THEY FIRE



THEN THE HEART IS REMOVED--



AND THE VICTIM IS STILL BEATING, TO A PIECE OF COLD STONE REPRESENTING ONE BRAVENOUS DEITY OR ANOTHER.

...AND JUST ONCE I WISH A DOXIE-GLITCH WOULD MAKE THE GOD BARK.



JUST KNOWING WHAT THEY'RE DOING UP THERE, ACE--NOT EVEN SEEING IT--GIVES ME THE WILLIES.

EACH VICTIM GOES EAGERLY TO HIS REWARD, BR DGET

AND HOW COULD MY VOICE NOT SOUND HOLLOW?



SO YOU SAY --AND WHO'S THIS BEAUTY?

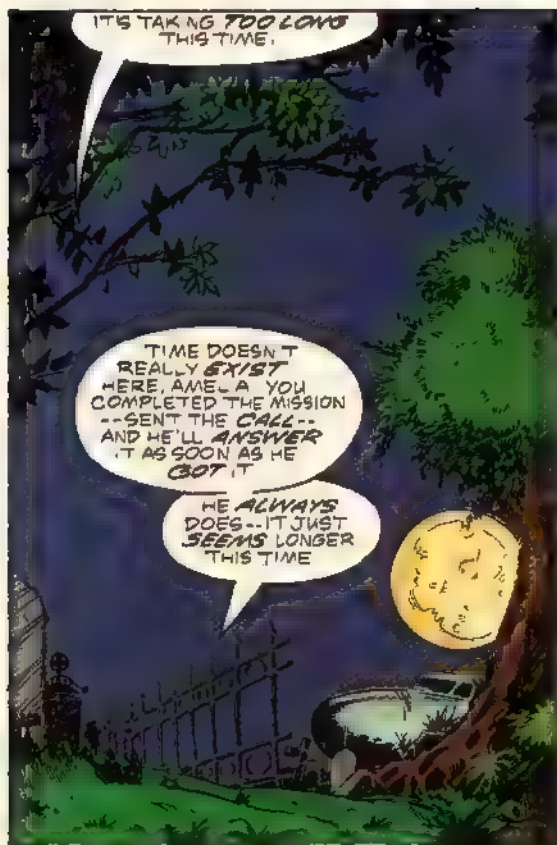
ENECAATL, THE WIND GOD--WHOSE BREATH STARTED THE MOVEMENT OF THE SUN.

SO THEY BELIEVE THE WORLD TURNS ON THE RANCID BREATH OF A DANCING MONKEY, HUH?



STRANGER THINGS IN HEAVEN AND HELL, HORATIO--BUT RIGHT NOW...

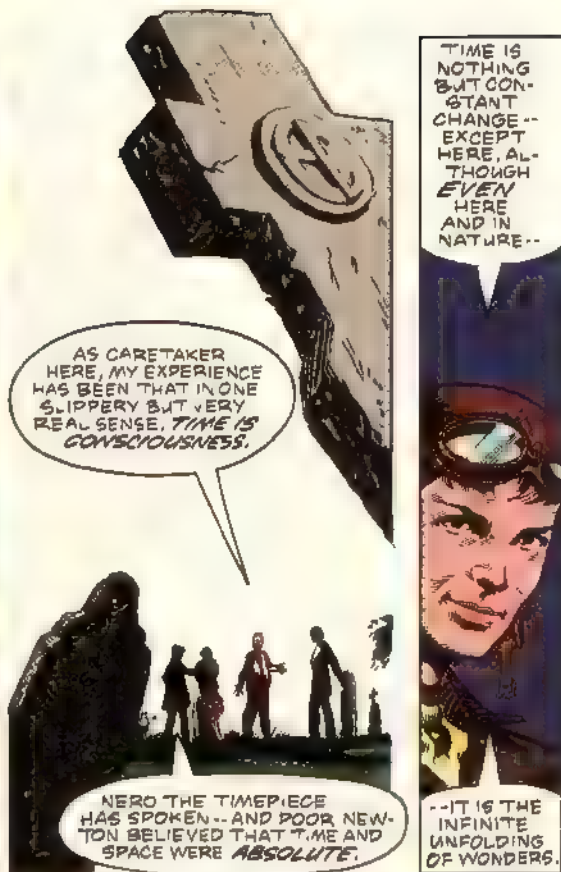
TIME TO TAKE THE THORN OUT FOR BED.



IT'S TAKING TOO LONG
THIS TIME.

TIME DOESN'T
REALLY EXIST
HERE, AMELIA. YOU
COMPLETED THE MISSION
--SENT THE CALL--
AND HE'LL ANSWER
IT AS SOON AS HE
GOT IT.

HE ALWAYS
DOES--IT JUST
SEEMS LONGER
THIS TIME.

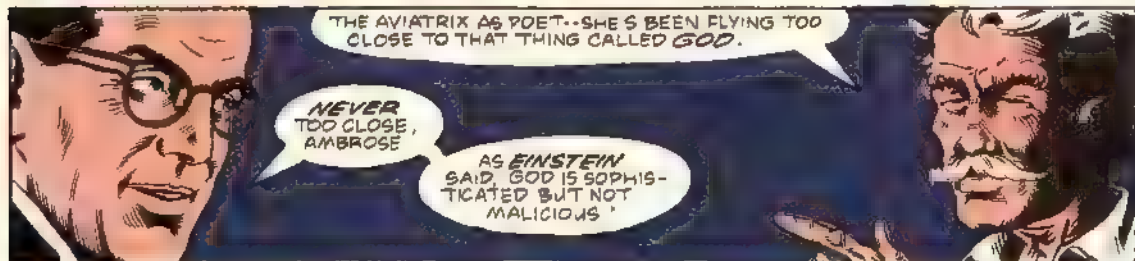


AS CARETAKER
HERE, MY EXPERIENCE
HAS BEEN THAT IN ONE
SLIPPERY BUT VERY
REAL SENSE, TIME IS
CONSCIOUSNESS.

NEVER THE TIMEPIECE
HAS SPOKEN--AND POOR NEW-
TON BELIEVED THAT TIME AND
SPACE WERE ABSOLUTE.

TIME IS
NOTHING
BUT CON-
STANT
CHANGE--
EXCEPT
HERE, AL-
THOUGH
EVEN
HERE
AND IN
NATURE--

--IT IS THE
INFINITE
UNFOLDING
OF WONDERS.



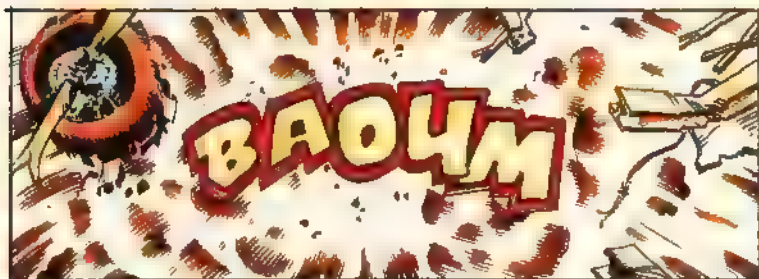
THE AVIATRIX AS POET--SHE'S BEEN FLYING TOO
CLOSE TO THAT THING CALLED GOD.

NEVER
TOO CLOSE,
AMBROSE

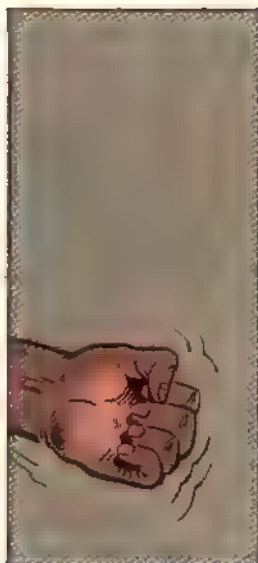
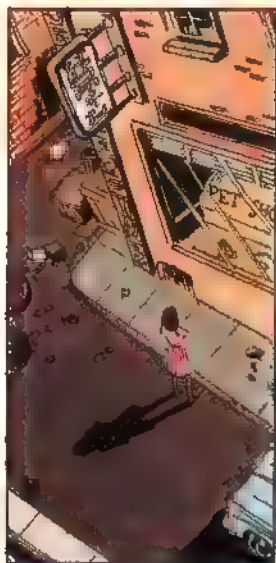
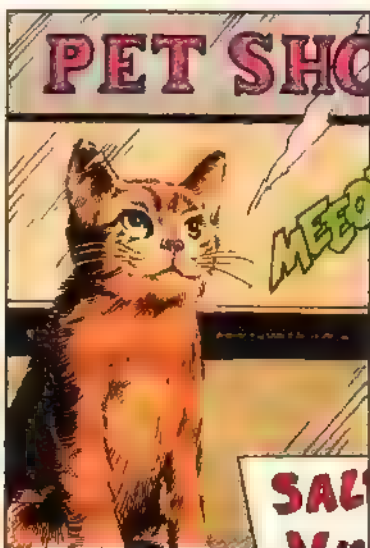
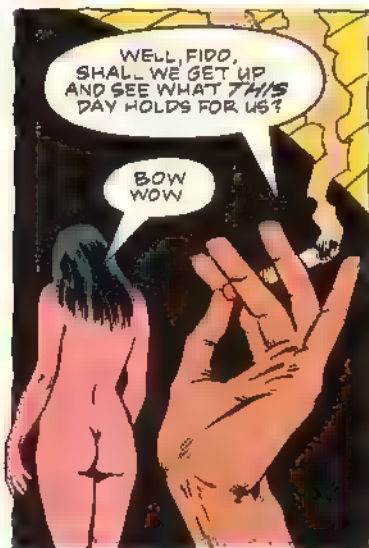
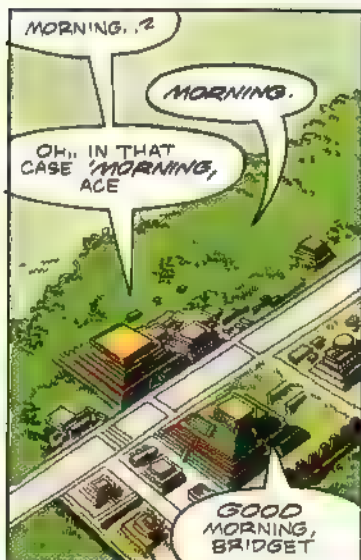
AS EINSTEIN
SAID, GOD IS SOPHIS-
TICATED BUT NOT
MALICIOUS.

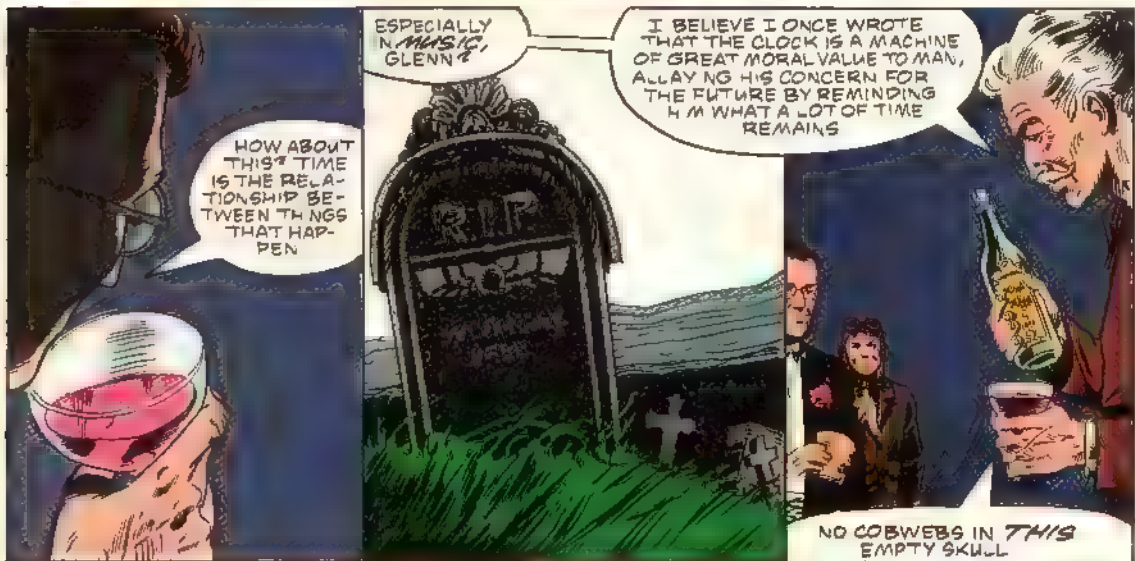
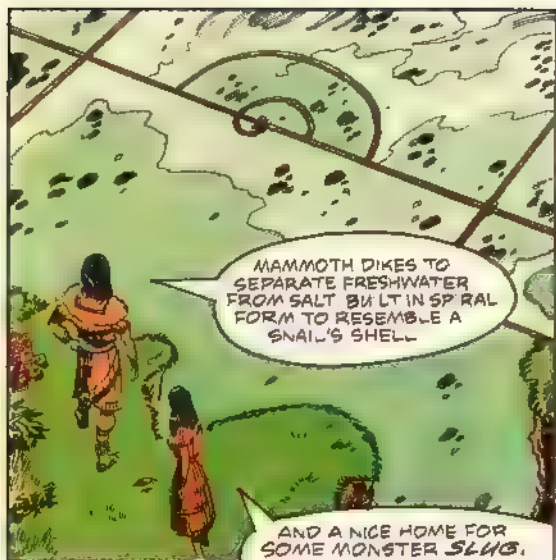


YOU HEAR
THAT, GOD?



WELL, AS HE ALSO
SAID--IT'S ALL
RELATIVE





FROM ONE OF TENOCHTITLAN'S POORER STRUCTURES--A HUT OF DRIED MUD--A FIRST WAIL GREET'S AN ENDLESS NEW MORNING...

A BABY, ACE...

JUST BORN. WOULD YOU CARE TO SEE?

OH, COULD WE, ACE...?



MIXPANTZINCO.
(IN YOUR AUGUST PRESENCE...)

XIMOPANOLTI,
TETE. (AT YOUR CONVENIENCE, DADDY.)

MOTHER AND FATHER ARE EQUALLY HONORED TO HAVE THE CEREMONY WITNESSED BY NOBILITY SUCH AS WE...

THE CORD IS CUT...

.. WRAPPED AROUND A LOOM-STRUT..

... PLACED IN A MAIZE BASKET...



WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

IT WAS A GIRL, AND HE ENSURED HER FUTURE AS A GOOD HOUSEWIFE BY HIS CHOICE OF FETISH AND PLACE OF BURIAL..

.. BUT YOU CAN BE SURE HE HAD AN ARROW READY FOR A BOY.

AND WHERE WOULD HE HAVE BURIED THE ARROW?

ON A BATTLEFIELD, OF COURSE

HAPPY HOUR

AUGUSTUS SAID: "IF I AM NOT ASKED WHAT TIME IT IS, I KNOW, BUT IF I AM ASKED TO EXPLAIN IT, I KNOW I DON'T KNOW."

LONG AFTER YOU THREE ...AH, VANISHED...THERE WAS A THEORY PROPOUNDED THAT TIME COMES N'BTS OR PARTICLES CALLED CHIRONONS.

LIKE THE GRAINS OF SAND IN AN HOUR-GLASS?

BOSH! TIME IS ENTROPY AND ENTROPY IS NOTHING BUT A EUPHEMISM FOR THE FACT THAT, GIVEN TIME, EVERYTHING DECAYS...

ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES, AND HAPPY TIMES THEY ARE, DECAY TAKES THE FORM OF FERMENTATION.

BRIDGET, THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SACRIFICES, PENANCE, RITUAL, SELF-MUTILATION...

...IT'S ALL TO APPEASE THE GODS AND ENSURE THAT THE SUN WILL RISE FOR ONE MORE DAY, THE RAINS WILL COME FOR ONE MORE GROWING SEASON...

THESE PEOPLE HARBOR IMMENSE SENSITIVITY--AND AWE FOR NATURE'S WONDERS--

--AS WELL AS TREMENDOUS FEAR THAT SUCH A NETWORK OF WONDER IS TOO FRAGILE TO ENDURE WITHOUT THE SUSTENANCE OF SACRIFICED BLOOD

"THEY SAY: 'IF THE SUN GIVES US LIFE, THEN WE MUST RETURN LIFE TO THE SUN GOD'--THE NOTION BEING THAT ONE MUST PAY FOR THE RIGHT OF EXISTENCE..."

"NO FREE LUNCH--THE BASIS OF ALL 'SUPERSTITION'--A NOT UNREASONING DREAD OF THE NATURAL SCHEME BEING FATALLY DISTURBED. INDEED, A SUCCINCT UNDERSTANDING OF THE AZTECS' PARADOXICAL NATURE IS FOUND IN THEIR VERSION OF GENESIS..."

AFTER THE ONE WORLD HAD BEEN CREATED AND DESTROYED FOUR TIMES, AND TO CREATE THE SUN AND MOON FOR A **FIFTH** EPOCH, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR TWO GODS TO COMMIT SUICIDE, hurling THEMSELVES INTO A FIRE

THEREAFTER TO KEEP THE SUN MOVING, AND THE ENTIRE COSMOS WORKING, THE GODS REQUIRED A DET OF HUMAN HEARTS AND BLOOD

AFTER ALL, IF THE GODS COULD SACRIFICE **THEIR** LIVES TO GIVE LIFE TO THE **AZTECS**, COULD THE AZTECS DO ANY LESS FOR **THEIR GODS?**

LIFE HAS A PRICE--IT CAN BE BARTERED, BOUGHT AND SOLD

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AND WHO SETS THE PRICE, ACE?

WHO INDEED? MAYBE THE CHICKEN. MAYBE THE EGG.

AND WHO SETS THE PRICE, ACE?

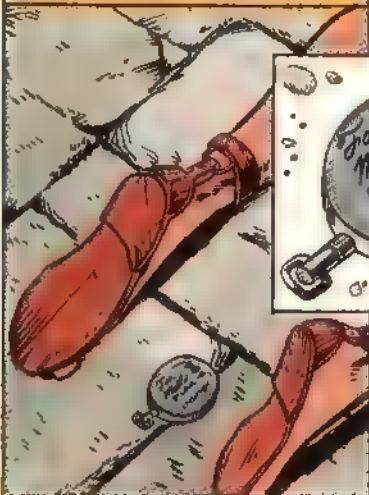
WHO INDEED? MAYBE THE CHICKEN. MAYBE THE EGG.



LOOKS LIKE IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

UH OH

THE OTHER ATHLETES ARE ALREADY CONVERGING WARILY ON THE FALLEN PLAYER--



I GO FOR THE COMPASS, CALLING IN NAHUATL!

THE OBJECT IS MINE!

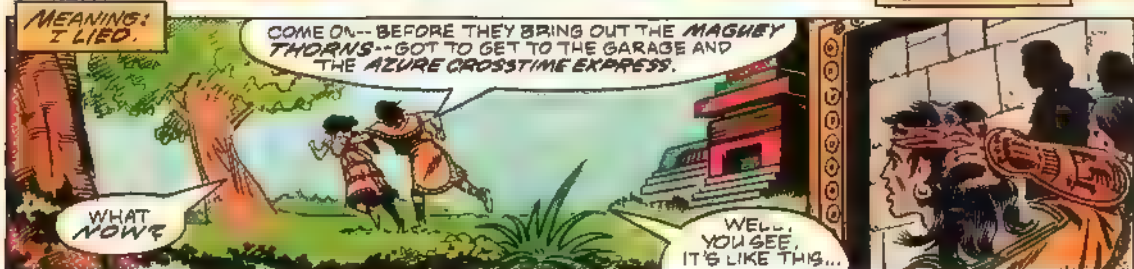


IT FLEW FROM MY HAND... ACCIDENTALLY

ARE YOU CERTAIN IT IS YOURS, CAZA?

I KISS THE EARTH

MEANING I SWEAR TO IT

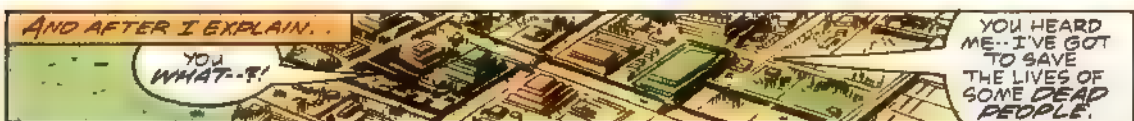


MEANING: I LIED.

COME ON-- BEFORE THEY BRING OUT THE MAGHEY THORNS-- GOT TO GET TO THE GARAGE AND THE AZURE CROSSTIME EXPRESS.

WHAT NOW?

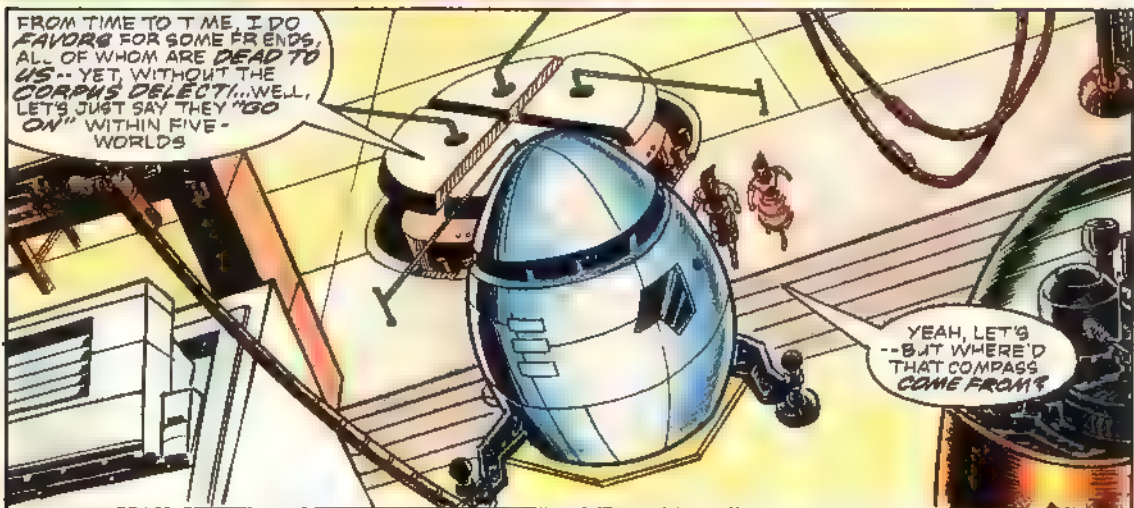
WELL, YOU SEE, IT'S LIKE THIS...



AND AFTER I EXPLAIN...

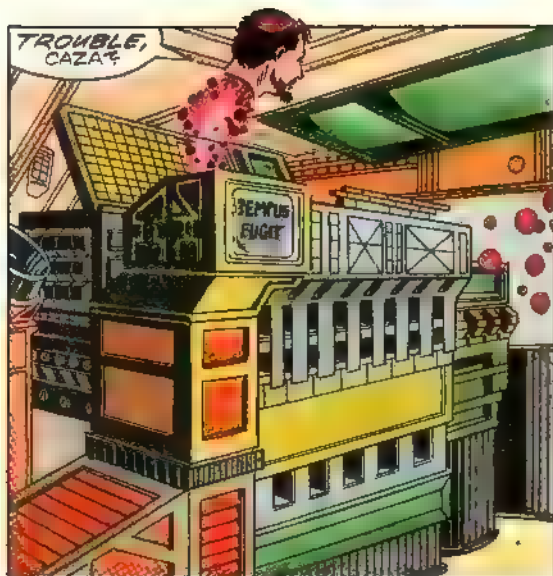
YOU WHAT--?

YOU HEARD ME-- I'VE GOT TO SAVE THE LIVES OF SOME DEAD PEOPLE.



FROM TIME TO TIME, I DO FAVORS FOR SOME FRIENDS, ALL OF WHOM ARE DEAD TO US-- YET, WITHOUT THE CORPUS DELECTI... WELL, LET'S JUST SAY THEY "GO ON" WITHIN FIVE- WORLDS

YEAH, LET'S --BUT WHERE'D THAT COMPASS COME FROM?



TROUBLE, CAZA?

TEMPUS FUGIT



HIT THE
MELD, HEAD
--APPEASE-
MENT T ME
AGAIN.

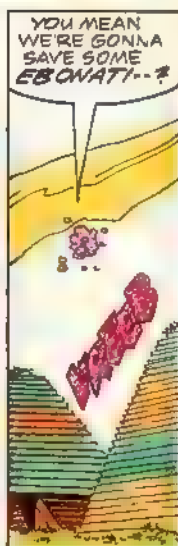
BOIT BOIT

THE COMPASS
CAME FROM A
TEMPORATION
CHAMBER, BRIDGET,
A DEVICE WHICH
TELEPORTS OBJECTS
THROUGH TIME
WITHOUT A
SHIFT-VEHICLE



THUS FAR T ONLY WORKS ON
NANIMATE OBJECTS OF A LIMITED
SIZE BUT, IT'S A REMARKABLE
START--AND KROK'S LAB BOYS
ON THE TH RD RE CH CITY-SHIP
ARE WAY AHEAD OF HEAD ON
THIS ONE

PTUI!

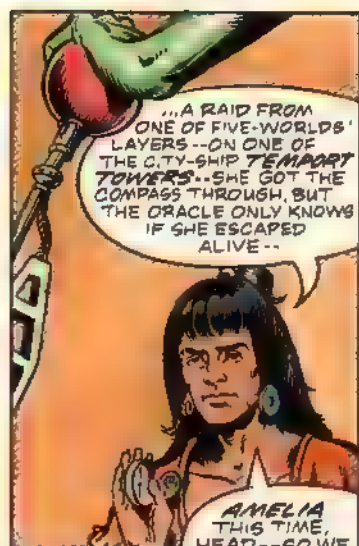


YOU MEAN
WE'RE GONNA
SAVE SOME
EBONATI--?



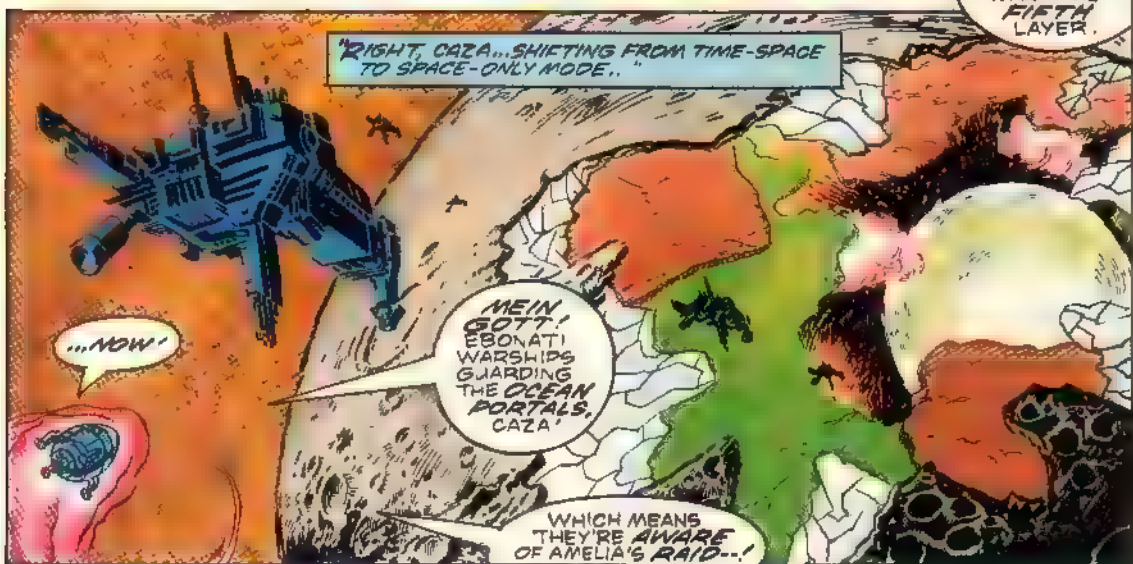
NO, NO--THERE
WAS A FORAY
TO THE
LIQUID
CORE--

WREED



"...A RAID FROM
ONE OF FIVE-WORLDS'
LAYERS--ON ONE OF
THE CITY-SHIP TEMPART
TOWERS--SHE GOT THE
COMPASS THROUGH, BUT
THE ORACLE ONLY KNOWS
IF SHE ESCAPED
ALIVE--

AMELIA
THIS TIME,
HEAD--SO WE
WANT THE
FIFTH
LAYER.



"RIGHT, CAZA...SHIFTING FROM TIME-SPACE
TO SPACE-ONLY MODE.."

...NOW

MEIN
GOTT!
EBONATI
WARSHIPS
GUARDING
THE OCEAN
PORTALS,
CAZA!

WHICH MEANS
THEY'RE AWARE
OF AMELIA'S RAID--!

THEY MAY
HAVE EVEN
CAUGHT HER
IN THE
ACT?

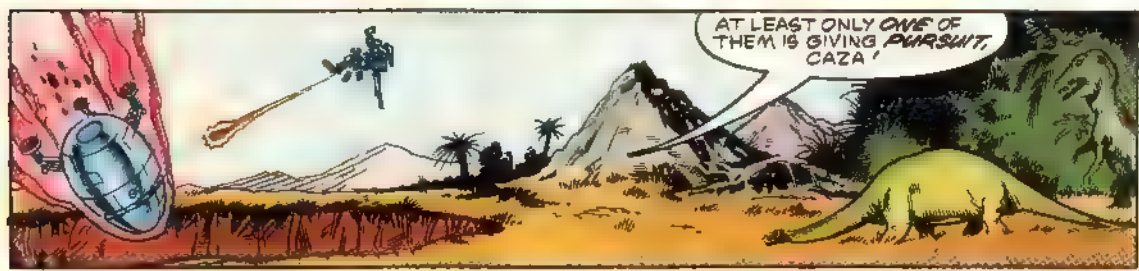


NOTHING
TO DO, BUT
GO FOR
BROKE,
TEMPUS...

...A CRASH-COURSE IN HISTORY
THROUGH THE **OUTER LAYER!**



AND DOWNWARD
TO THE
FUTURE!

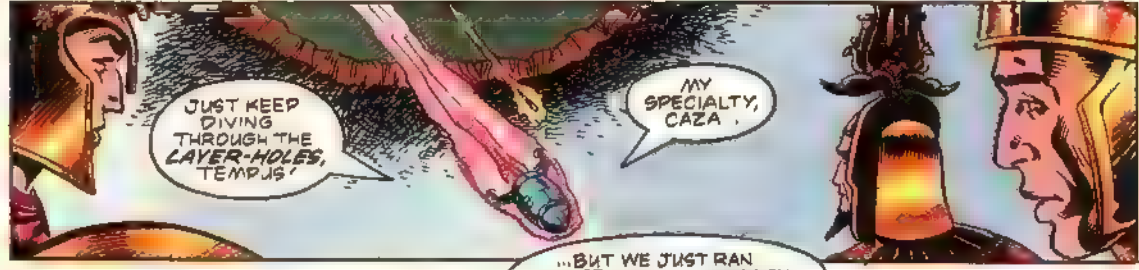


AT LEAST ONLY **ONE** OF
THEM IS GIVING PURSUIT,
CAZA!



THE OTHERS
ARE REMAIN-
ING AT
THEIR
STATIONS,
NO
DOUBT--

--TO GUARD
THE **OTHER**
PORTALS...



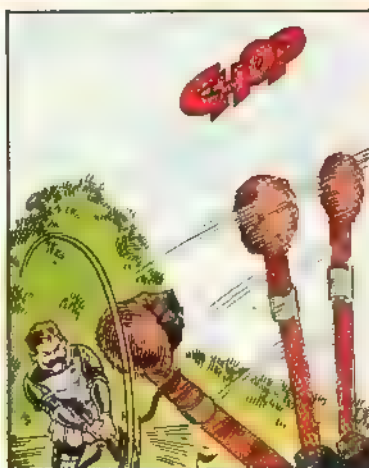
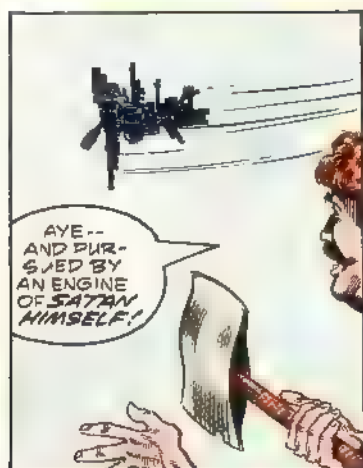
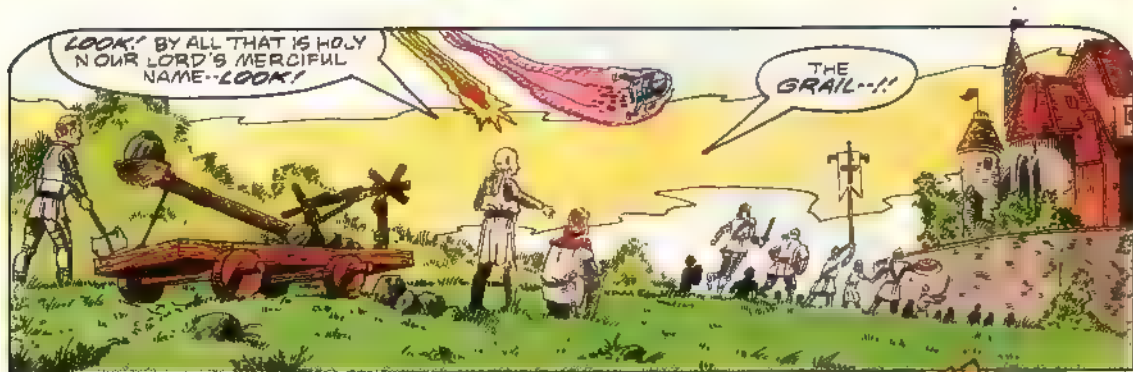
JUST KEEP
DIVING
THROUGH THE
LAYER-HOLES,
TEMPUS!

MY
SPECIALTY,
CAZA!



...BUT WE JUST RAN
OUT OF LUCK--NO NEARBY
OCEAN-HOLE ON THE
FOURTH LAYER!

WE'LL HAVE
TO FOLLOW THE
GROUND UNTIL
WE **REACH ONE--**
AND THE EBNATI
SHIP IS
GAINING!



FINAL
DESTINATION,
ACE--THE
GRAVE-
YARD

AND
AMELIA
MADE IT UP
FROM THE
LIQUID
CORE--
THOUGH JUST
BARELY,
FROM THE
LOOKS OF HER
ELECTRA...

TH--THAT'S...THAT'S
GLENN, MY--

I WAS--
THE LAST TIME IT
MEANT ANYTHING
AND YOU MUST BE
BRIDGET.

HUH--?

AND WE'RE AMELIA
AND AMBROSE.

AMELIA AND.. I I
THINK I'M CATCHING ON
--YOU TWO BOTH VANISHED
WITHOUT A TRACE..

TRUE, OUR
FLESH WAS NEVER
RECOVERED--IN REAL-
TIME.

THEN...
YOU TOO, GLENN?
BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO
YOU--?

MUCH THE SAME
AS WHAT HAPPENED
TO AMELIA AND
AMBROSE --IN
1944.

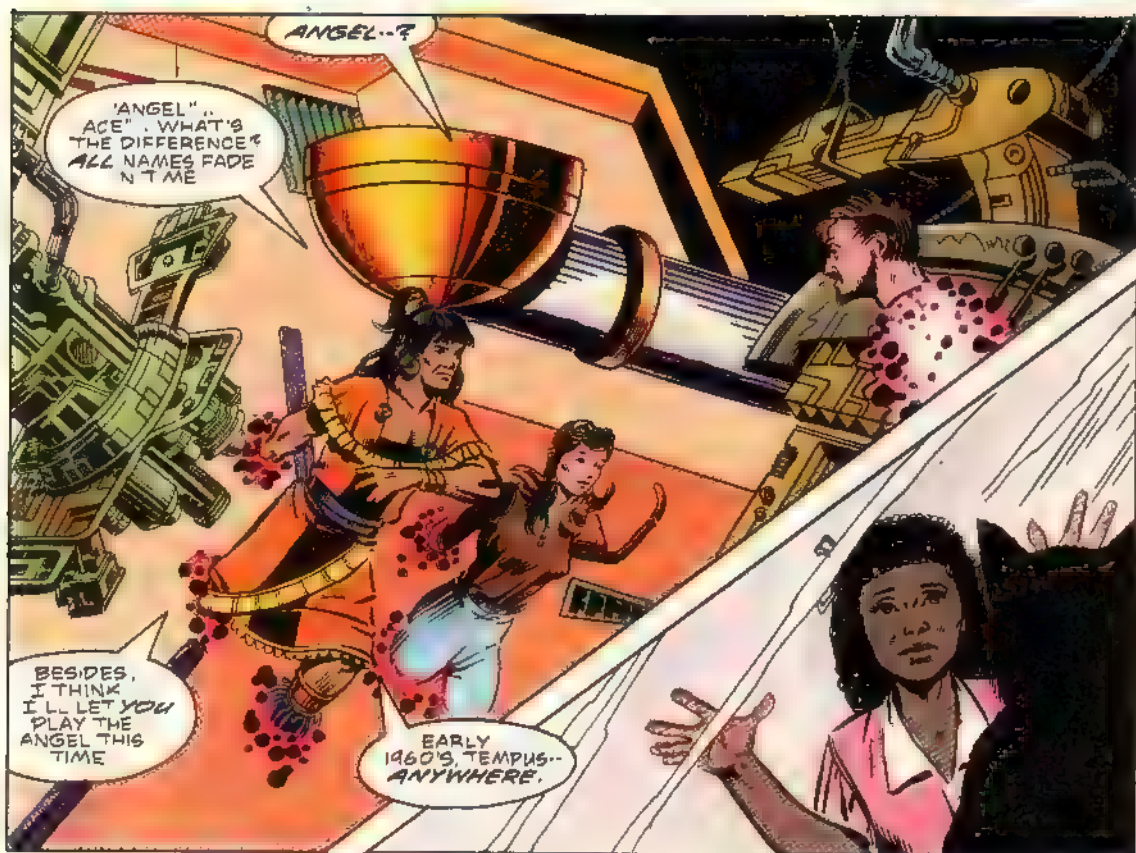
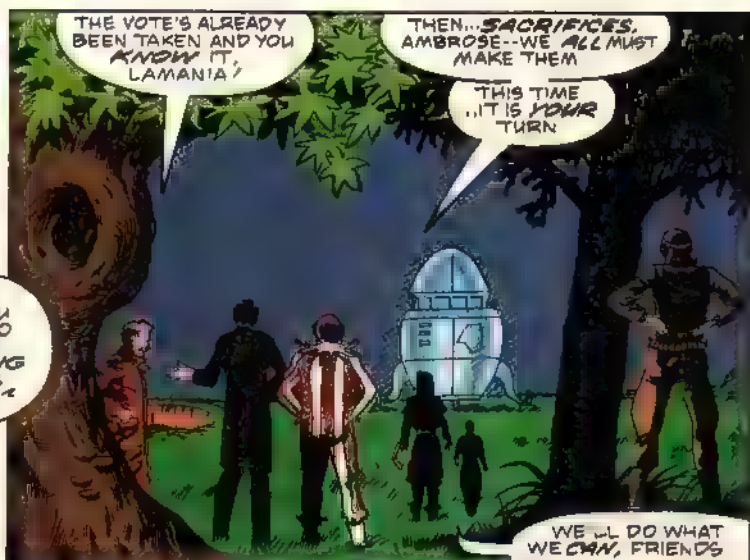
BUT BACK IN
'40--WHERE I
CAME FROM--YOU
WERE JUST GETTING
STARTED WITH--

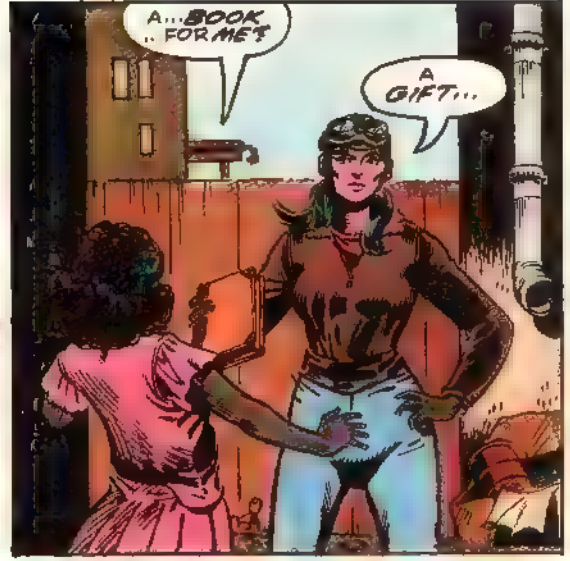
WHAT'S
THE
TASK
THIS
TIME,
LAMA-
NIA?

THIS
MUST BE BURIED BACK IN REAL-
TIME, CAZA

IT IS FATED TO
HAVE AN INFLUENCE,
TO AFFECT A LIFE, AND
TO SHAPE A PART OF THE
FUTURE IN WAYS TIME
MUST KNOW.

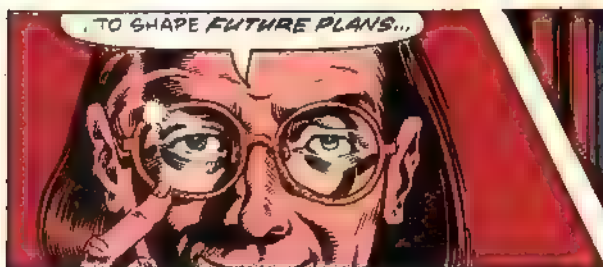
THAT'S A FIRST
EDITION! WHERE'D
YOU GET THAT,
YOU SNAKE?











AND AS AN INTERRUPTED SERENADE TAKES FLIGHT IN THE FOG, THUS ENDS NOVEMBER SECOND, THE AZTEC "DAY OF THE DEAD," TRADITIONALLY CELEBRATED WITH PICNICS IN GRAVEYARDS.



YOUR
TIME HAS
BEEN AP-
PEASED...

FOR
ANOTHER
WHILE.

FOR
BOOGIE,
VICTIM
OF
FELINE
LEUKEMIA,
1973-1984
R.P.



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OH, BUT THAT NUMBER 5

Whoopsy-doodle, Mist' Terry—and I quote from Tom Burnam's **DICTIONARY OF MISINFORMATION** (consumed several weeks—aw, what the heck, let's say 23 days—after scripting #8's "Mousing for Galileo"):

"There are many fallacies connected with the famous Italian astronomer and physicist:

"1. Galileo did not invent the telescope; it was invented in 1608 in Holland. He did, however, make his own telescope in 1609 and pioneered its use as an astronomical instrument.

"2. Although tried by the Inquisition, he was never tortured.

"3. He never uttered under his breath 'E pur si muove' ('Nevertheless it does move').

"4. He never spent so much as a day in prison; his punishment was a kind of 'house arrest.'

"5. He did not come to any theories about the pendulum as a result of observing a swinging lamp in the cathedral of Pisa...

"6. ... His name was Galileo only in the sense that Lincoln's name was Abraham. His father was Vincenzo Galilei, who named his son Galileo Galilei."

Those with prodigious memories, or who care to reread "Mousing for Galileo," will note that I managed to get five out of the six correct. Not too bad, right? Except the one I got wrong—the swinging lamp/pendulum schtick—is precisely the one which makes Galileo Galilei so nifty in the context of **AZTEC ACE**. In humble defense, I can only point out that every one of my reference sources, including the **ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA**, also got tripped up by good old number 5. Okay, everybody, let's just wipe #8 off the slate—it never happened—and move forward to the issues before...

SURE, PETER, BUT WHO KILLED THE BLACK DAHLIA?

AZTEC ACE is a gas. A fully realized writerly comic. They're the kind I always enjoy the most. A lot of people seem to view comics, even at their best, to be cheap movies; "cinematic" is their highest encomium. But I appreciate comics because they can do more than movies—visual impact, sure, but also concepts which can be treated in a depth beyond the surface. You can get funny with narrative in comics the way you can't with a movie, because movies are real-time while you can turn the pages of a comic at any speed (and in any order!) you desire. There is also in comics the potential for text which is neither dialogue nor voiceover; it's prose. Sometimes poetry.

ACE exploits all of this. The chapter headings with their delightful density; the conversations that owe more to Dickens-

James than to Dick 'n Jane, and the plotting which is mosaic instead of linear (as someone once said about Van Vogt). It takes someone with a real delight in language to have written **AZTEC ACE**. I won't even mention skill. And it is this same love of expression, of the subtlety of language and its diversity, which is so often missing even in the finest comic book writing. It ain't found often, and then as often as not goes unappreciated. **POGO**, **KRAZY KAT**, Alan Moore's stuff, and Papa Stan at his best. Love in all of 'em.

It's the sort of stuff that most commercial editors, intelligent as well as otherwise, will tell you just won't work—and sorry, they won't buy it. And in a certain sense they're right: **AZTEC ACE** is not a cheap movie—not even a good cheap movie. It moves in ten directions at once and builds involvement (convolvement and evolvment) instead of tension. It ain't perfect, I must say: Dan Day's weaknesses are most apparent when the characters chase each other or throw a punch. And sometimes the settings cry out for more roomy treatment. But there is a richness to the art as well as the writing which more than makes up for the minor flaws.

I realize I haven't even mentioned the subject of the book—and I won't, except to say that after reading **ACE** I think that comics may be one of the few media in which time-stories (not mere time-travel stories) can be so vividly done. Only the comic book form can effectively convey simultaneous narratives. The split-screen of a film is unwatchable; the two-column page of print is a gimmick that simply doesn't work.

And you write great wimmen.

I'm not going to disparage comics readers who don't like the book or praise the erudition and fine taste of those who do; that sort of thing sent me into screaming insecurity as a fan and bothers the part of me who still appreciates a good punch-eminnaface Marvel melodrama. I'll just say that **AZTEC ACE** does things for me. Good things. Thanks.

Peter B. Gillis
3045 N. Racine Ave.
Chicago, Ill. 60657

Peter, mah friend, I thanks ye—and good luck with *Blaze Barrow*, *Black Flame*, and *Scratch* over at First Comics. Also, say hi to Tom Sutton for me—and thanks again for bringing out the Japanese animated version of Doc Smith's "Lensman" saga.

But permit me to disagree on the watchability of split-screen techniques. When it's done right, I love it! Portions of *The Boston Strangler*, in my opinion, were markedly improved by the use of split-screen—although it's admittedly hard to tell when viewing the film (with its sides cropped) on a video screen. And even if Brian DePalma is hardly one of my favorite directors, I can't deny that the "bomb on the dune buggy" scene from *Phantom of the Paradise* as well as

several scenes from *Sisters* were all highly effective by virtue of their split-screen "simultaneity of suspense." (Gadzooks, if only *Hitchcock* had tried his hand at split-screen...)

And if two-column print doesn't work either, how can I still love Kenneth Patchen's *Journal of Albion Moonlight* so much?

TIME TO PLAY B-SIDES

OK: Time...time to understand, time that it takes to understand, time to write for the future that has passed.

Who are you really, Mr. Moench? Your writing is an art both of and not of this time. **AZTEC ACE** has left me breathless, and after reading "Murderide" in #7, all I can say is, "Hooooo..."

The intermingled tragedy and beauty of this book is highly interesting. What you're doing here, in a 4C comic, could easily be adapted into book form (you know, those things without the pictures). This is not to say it doesn't work the way you're doing it. Indeed, the drawing and panelling get better with age. I especially like the visual motif of playing cards here in #7. What an illustrated color format does for Acey-deuce, I'm not really sure; all I know is I like what I see and read. Even though it took about five issues to really understand what was/is/will be going on, it was precisely this factor of tantalizing ambiguity which made the series all the more fascinating. You probably had it planned this way, sly dogs.

The concepts are so unique and convoluted in themselves, I'm surprised you've remained so consistent. That's no mean feat, the storyline has developed with smooth complexity and without fatening a step.

I'm not even sure this is a comic book, and I'm pleased and awed that a book like this can exist in a market where *Secret Wars* (ech, yuch, piech) is king.

Thank you—Dan, Doug, Nestor. Time slowly fades... "ticking away like the moments that make up a dull day..." (Did I mention I love the jukebox's taste in music?) And move over, Caza—I'm in love with Bridget too!

Jay Mazur
725 E. 79th St
Brooklyn, NY 11236

For the record, Jay, **AZTEC ACE** is not a traditional mechanically separated four-color comic. Phil DeWalt paints every page, and Eclipse pays big bucks for those laser-scan color separations, y'know. Bear that in mind the next time you peruse **ACE**—and let your eyeballs slowly savor the color, okay?

LEMON MEROVINGIAN

I've finally figured out the reason I enjoy **AZTEC ACE** so much. It's the chemistry.

Ace and Bridget are not your typical comic book characters. They are portrayed so skillfully that they truly come alive—real people with real personalities and true chemistry between them. This is a great achievement on your part, Doug, and I congratulate you on it. Too often, comic book characters are shallow, wooden stereotypes draped in muscles, capes, and skimpy costumes. And none are as convincing as yours.

The chemistry between Bridget and Ace nostalgically reminds me of the romance between Bogey and Bergman in *Casablanca*. The dialogue is wonderful, easily the best and most realistic in comics.

"Murderide" greatly adds to the developing relationship between Bridget and Ace—a tragic story, full of foreshadowing and symbolism, which is ultimately very romantic. I enjoyed every bit of it, crying and laughing at all the right places. And I'd say that's just what it's all about, eh?

Robert T. Jeschonek
129 Hostetler Rd
Johnstown, PA 15904

You betchum, Red Robert. But you brought up alchemy—I didn't.

YEAH, BUT WHY DID THE TEMPLARS REVILE THE CROSS?

Reading the lettercol in **AZTEC ACE** #6, I came across something that sounded distinctly familiar—the letter comparing

ACE to a physics textbook, and to which you replied that you hate physics textbooks. Well, that was my letter, and take it easy; I only meant that **AZTEC ACE** is jam-packed with information and if you merely skim it you're going to miss a lot and end up confused (Pay attention; there's going to be a quiz next period!) But that's where the similarity definitely ends. **ACE** is a million times more interesting (and fun!) than any ole physics book. And #6 was just as good as ever; keep it up, please!

P.S. Even though I wrote in before as "Rose Hunter," my real name is:

Laura L. Bell
Wright 12-306
Indiana University
Bloomington, Ind 47405

Thanks for the clarification, Laura. Between physics and alchemy, we were all getting just a bit spooked around here. But now maybe you can explain why you found it so necessary to hide behind the *Rose Croix*, hm?

AND WHERE IS DAGOBERT IF NOW THAT WE NEED HIM?

I still can't believe you've outdone **AZTEC ACE** #4...and so soon! "Murderide" surely ranks up there with your classic opus in #s 58-63. I am alternately stymied, illuminated, remorseful, and ecstatic. A love story like this goes beyond the irony of ill-fated Japanese lovers taking each others' lives in accordance with Bushido tradition. Bridget took her own life to see it continue for eternity...and witnessed the locus of the transitional temporal paradox as well! Despite Caza's lies to her and himself, she was nevertheless able to place things in their separate perspectives long enough to designate her own fate(s). Martyrdom doesn't even enter the picture, and yet she has killed herself for mankind's greater good—as has Caza, in a metaphysical sense. Never has greater meaning been given to the expression "star-crossed lovers." Orpheus and Eurydice, Romeo and Juliet, Caza and Bridget. Tempus Fugit and Sheba RT-3000—these tragedies are all timeless, transcending the subjective.

No less profound is the marriage of prose and visuals achieved by Moench and Day—a virtual fulfillment of what the comics medium has always promised. Symbiosis. Form and content mirror one another to produce a synthesis which transcends the mechanics of the medium. Juxtaposition designates outcome. You're creating a paradox by demystifying another paradox.

With comics of this stature, the industry is destined for greater days. It may be a long time coming, but I'll enjoy the wait...

Steven Feldman
50 Barnes Street
Providence, R.I. 02906

"Illuminated," huh, Steve? "Martyrdom," hah? Just what is it you people are trying to tell me?

NEXT ISSUE (if I manage to finish reading **HOLY BLOOD**, **HOLY GRAIL** without going schizo): Will likely be the one issue in this series that'll come closest to fitting that halcyon descriptive, the "all-action ish." Actually, it's the first part of a two-parter and Part Two just might contain even more action than Part One, but why quibble over a left hook or two? First comes "Lord of the Smoking Mirror," which is then followed by "Reflections in a Demon's Eye." After that, we've got "Bloody Pulp" on tap—in which a 1940 detective named Lou Kinsolving falls in love with a dead dame found in a sewer; her name is Bridget Kronopoulous. This is followed by "Fading Spirits," in which Ace becomes (no lie!) a comic book superhero, the better to bust up the Muggsy Griffith and Stick Terhune mobs. And sooner or later, no doubt, Jean Cocteau will get around to revealing just who is up on that cross and why there were two John the XXIIIs.

Leave your night light on, kiddies.

—Doug

THE HERO TOO TOUGH TO DIE!

NICE TRY,
THOUGH.

R.I.P.
MICHAEL
GILBERT

WRITER/EDITOR
LAYOUTS
©1984

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Wm. LOESS
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Mugshots of the Timelost

FROM THE GUESTBOOK OF NERO LAMANIA



AMBROSE BIERCE (1842 - ?)

A newspaperman, satirist, misanthrope, and author of dark stories on the themes of death and horror (notably "An Occurance at Owl Creek Bridge"), Ambrose fought and bled in a number of Civil War battles.

Once a printer's devil, he went on to write *The Devil's Dictionary* in 1906, including in its compendium of enigmatic definitions a listing for "Illuminati."

British friends called him "Bitter Bierce."

In 1913, while Pancho Villa was in the midst of leading a revolution, Ambrose announced his departure for Mexico, claiming he had "a definite purpose which is not at present disclosable."

He was never seen again.

The world's most celebrated aviatrix, Amelia was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean solo, on May 20-21, 1932 — and the first person, male or female, to make a solo flight from Hawaii to California, in January of 1935, after all previous attempts had ended in disaster.

Having worked as a military nurse in Canada during World War I, and later as a social worker in Boston, Amelia married publisher George P. Putnam in 1931, but continued to romance the sky under her own name.

In 1937, with World War II brewing, she set out with navigator Fred Noonan in her twin-engine Lockheed Electra, daring the Furies in an attempt to fly around the world.

Somewhere over the Pacific, after completing two-thirds of the epic flight, she and Noonan sent one last cryptic radio message.

They were never seen again.



AMELIA EARHART (1898 - ?)



GLENN MILLER (1904 - ?)

Composer, trombonist, and big-band leader of the swing era, Glenn is perhaps best remembered for his haunting signature tune, "Moonlight Serenade," and for his recording of the perennially popular "In the Mood."

During World War II, Glenn became a major in the U.S. Air Force, as well as a leader of the Air Force band in Europe. Scheduled to play in Paris, he took off from an airfield in England on December 16, 1944.

He was never seen again.

The DNAgents Dynasty!

Don't miss *any* part of it!

CROSSFIRE
DNAGENTS
SURGE

